

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business



Monday, 14 December 2020

CRACKING THE GENETIC CODE TO BETTER PATIENT CARE

Victoria's genomic sequencing program will give more patients access to the answers they need sooner thanks to support from the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford said the \$36 million investment in the Melbourne Genomics Health Alliance would accelerate the adoption of genomic sequencing across the healthcare system – giving Victorians access to quicker, more accurate diagnosis and more effective treatment.

At 11 months and in the absence of genomic testing, Bree Faulkner was diagnosed with a common genetic kidney disease that often results in the need for dialysis and transplants – a condition that has a 50 per cent chance of being passed on.

Decades later – when Bree hoped to start a family – detailed genomic testing revealed she had a different form of the disease caused by a recessive gene change, meaning her future children would not get kidney disease. She and her husband are now proud parents to a healthy and spirited toddler.

In 2015, Victoria became the first state to invest in a cutting-edge genomic testing program which has now been accessed by more than 4,000 Victorians with rare or undiagnosed illnesses.

Genomic testing also plays a vital role in maintaining a resilient healthcare system, with Melbourne Genomics supporting the testing capability used to track the transmission of coronavirus in Victoria.

The Melbourne Genomics Health Alliance is a collaboration of 10 leading hospitals, research and academic organisations – the Royal Melbourne Hospital, the Royal Children's Hospital, the University of Melbourne, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, CSIRO, the Australian Genome Research Facility, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Austin Health and Monash Health.

The new investment – part of the *Victorian Budget 2020/21* – will create 60 jobs and expand patient access across Victoria's healthcare system. The Budget contained more than \$260 million in total to support our world-leading researchers, clinicians and scientists.

Victoria is home to 14 independent medical research institutes that employ more than 5,800 people. The state's wider medical research sector supports more than 30,000 jobs across institutes, universities and industry.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"Bree's story shows how genomic sequencing can make a world of difference to the lives of Victorians."

"We're backing our world-leading healthcare innovators to continue their amazing work and expand access to genomic sequencing and the benefits it can bring."

Quote attributable to Melbourne Genomics Health Alliance executive director Professor Clara Gaff

"Together, the 10 Melbourne Genomics Health Alliance members have shown that genomics can deliver life-saving and life-changing outcomes. Genomic medicine will benefit thousands of Victorians in the long term."

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